

PROVOCATOR

October 2018

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION VOLUME 49/NUMBER 1

DEDICATION
SOLIDARITY
PROFESSIONALISM
PRIDE
SECOND TO NONE



BTF Members Sticking with the Union

Ninety-nine percent of BTF members have decided to stick with their union and have signed recommitment cards!

The recommitment campaign, which was organized by BTF and NYSUT, was conducted from March through August through the efforts of BTF delegates and officers as well as the NYSUT Member Organizing Institute (MOI).

During the campaign, MOI participants visited homes of members throughout Western New York and discussed the implications of the *Janus vs. AFSCME* Supreme Court decision that went against unions in late June.

Under the *Janus* ruling, unions can no longer charge a fair-share fee to nonmembers for the representation the unions provide. The fair-share fee was a portion of dues charged to non-members to cover the costs associated with representation. The goal of the *Janus* case by our enemies was to cripple labor unions and weaken workers' rights.

The opposite occurred at the BTF and other public sector bargaining units across New York State. The *Janus* case actually strengthened the solidarity among our members.

Your dues pay for the cost of the following:

- Negotiating contracts that provide better pay, good benefits, and a secure retirement
- Providing legal support to help members defend their rights and enforce their contracts

- Providing professional development, training conferences, and assistance with certifications for members
- Amplifying our voice and advocating for our profession in the media and online
- Fighting to ensure our voice is heard in the halls of power
- Providing an office with a full time staff that Buffalo teachers can turn to when the need arises
- Providing NYSUT regional offices with the resources and technical infrastructure to support locals like the BTF
- Partnering with state and national unions to amplify our voice and defend our values

Employees who are not members of the BTF are not eligible to vote or run in elections for the BTF Executive Committee or Council of Delegates. Non-members are also ineligible to participate in committees and have no say in ratifying collective bargaining agreements.

Non-members also cannot vote or run in elections of any of our affiliates: New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), National Education Association (NEA), and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

Non-members are also unable to take advantage of many other union-sponsored benefits.

A Celebration of the Life of Tom Pisa

Thomas J. Pisa always will be remembered for his hard work and dedication to the Buffalo Teachers Federation and its members.

Tom, as he preferred to be called, was the past president of the Buffalo Teachers Federation. He was elected president in 1970 and served for 11 years. He was the BTF's first full-time release president. Tom passed away on June 1st after a lengthy illness.

Many of his contributions to the BTF were recalled on September 22nd at a memorial service held at Blessed Sacrament Church on Delaware Avenue in Buffalo that was attended by about 200 people.

What many teachers working today don't know is just how much Tom shaped the BTF and how he laid the foundation for it to become the strong union it is today.

During the Pisa years, the BTF negotiated the Supplemental Benefit Fund with the District as well as the Sick Leave Bank. Additional personal leave days were negotiated, from two to five, as was a new pay warrant schedule which eliminated a three-week interval of paychecks twice during the year. The Extended Pay Plan was also negotiated during Pisa's time in office.

Furthermore, Tom obtained the District's agreement to begin the Buffalo Teacher Center and began publishing the *Provocator*.

These are just a few of the positive changes that happened under Tom Pisa's leadership. In addition to working hard for the teachers of Buffalo, Tom Pisa was a gentle soul with a kind heart. When he was jailed after the 1976 strike, he sent two members of the BTF staff grocery shopping for another inmate whose wife and children did not have food in their home. In fact, his only complaint about being jailed was that he regretted missing the Blizzard of '77.

Tom left his beloved city in 1981 to move to Albany after being elected president of the New York Education Association (NYEA), later to become NEA-NY. While in Albany, his support for the BTF never wavered. He returned to Buffalo often while president of our state affiliate.

Without the toil and sweat from early leaders like Tom Pisa, we wouldn't have many of the provisions in our contract that we do. We appreciate all that he did during his 11 years as BTF president.

"We will never forget you", BTF President Phil Rumore said during the service. "Goodbye, my friend."

Save the Date

October 19: Evening of Solidarity
3:30-6:30 PM

The Terrace @ Delaware Park
Hors D'oeuvres/Cash bar

October 26 & 27: BTF Delegate Leadership Workshop, the Millennium Hotel, Cheektowaga. Registration begins at 5 PM on 10/26. Workshop ends at 2 PM on 10/27.

November 15 & 16
Thanksgiving Food Drive
Drop Food off at BTF Office

November 19 & 20
Packing and Distributing Food to Agencies for Thanksgiving



Not Now, Not Ever

“The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing” .. Albert Einstein

Buffalo teachers never “look on and do nothing”; however, now more than in many, many years, we must continue to reach out, join together, organize, battle and prevail over the forces that would destroy us and undermine all that we have fought to accomplish.

We have done it in the past and, yes, we are doing it again.

Buffalo teacher after teacher is defying the attempts of the union-busting billionaires, hedge funders and politicians who want to see the BTF and all unions eliminated.

Buffalo teachers are re-signing membership forms to show the District (especially in our upcoming negotiations) and the public our unwavering solidarity. Buffalo teachers, as always, are not standing by doing nothing. We are working together to ensure that all Buffalo teachers renew their commitment to each other with their BTF membership.

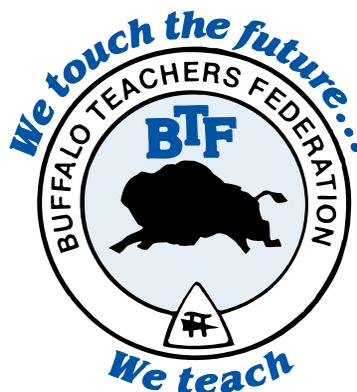
Buffalo teachers have committed to vote and to get their friends and families to vote in November.

Buffalo teachers are speaking out about security issues and making important school safety recommendations to ensure that our schools are safe.

Buffalo teachers are participating in the Opt-out movement to end the meaningless and detrimental over-testing of our students.

We have not, and have never, looked on and done nothing; however, we must continue to reach out to and mobilize our families and friends about the important issues and challenges we all confront. We need to ensure that they, too, do not just look on but rather join with us to fight against those who would undermine all that we have fought for and that we seek to accomplish on behalf of our students, community, state and, yes, our country.

Yes, the issues are formidable; but together, so are we. We never give up!



RUMORE CONTROL
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BTF at a Glance

BTF President

Philip Rumore

BTF Vice President

Rebecca Pordum

BTF Treasurer

Joseph Montante

BTF Secretary

Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan



BTF Executive Committee Members

Pre-K-6

Rachel Binda-Lis,
Sophia Howard-Johnson,
Trisha Rosokoff, Janine Schuster
Christopher Stephens,
Ruyvette Townsend

7-12

Dennis Brancato, Patrick Foster,
Lynn Garcia, Melissa Kenney,
M. Sue Raichilson, Chris Salamone,
Eve Shippens-Nieves

K-12

Susan Marie Baker, Nicole Herkey,
Catherine Lipsitz, Mark Mecca,
Gregory Sawicki, Elizabeth Spiro-Carman

At Large

Marc Bruno, Tom Gattie, Mike Mecca

BTF Headquarters Staff

Philip Rumore, *President*
Joseph Montante, *Presidential Assistant*
Rebecca Pordum, *Presidential Assistant*
Tim Connick, *NYSUT Counsel*
Deana Fox, *NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist*
Dennis Licherelli, *NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist*
Anna Geronimo, *NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist*

Visit Our Updated Website
www.btfny.org

PROVOCATOR

BTF Provocator Staff

Joseph Montante, *managing editor, photo editor*
Chris Salamone, *editor*

The **Provocator** is the official publication of the Buffalo Teachers Federation. It will be published six times during the 2018-2019 school year as a service to BTF members and interested parties in the community. Subscription price is included in BTF dues.

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The **BTF** is an affiliate of **NYSUT**, **AFT** and **NEA**.

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Letters to the Editor

BTF Thanked for Contribution to STEAM Camp

On behalf of the Board of Directors, children, and families enrolled in the STEAM Camp, thank you! We are truly appreciative for the \$300 sponsorship from the BTF.

The 57 participants and parents were very engaged and busy this summer. In keeping with the focus of our camp, all program youth participated in hands-on learning activities that related to weekly STEAM themes. The themes included: **Science:** Cool Science; **Technology:** Simple Machines; **Engineering:** Build It; **Art:** Bring out the Artist in Me; **Math:** Music, Math and More!

While the site-based activities were stimulating, it was important that the campers had a range of experiences throughout their six weeks that also aligned with a STEAM theme. The campers attended six field trips which consisted of the Science Museum, Buffalo Zoo, Freedom Wall (students met artist and created their own Freedom Wall mini-book), Buffalo and Erie County Library (designed STEAM related programming), UniverSoul Circus and Fantasy Island (provided a STEAM curriculum that related to the amusement park).

The campers also experienced intergenerational programming through their community service project. The campers participated in a one-day service project with senior citizens at the Clemons Hodge Center. They read with the seniors, made arts and crafts, had lunch and played board games.

The staff continued to stress the value of family and encouraged parent participation. Parents attended the opening orientation, field trips, volunteered at the camp and attended the closing STEAM Showcase.

Because of your support, First Shiloh Youth Foundation was able to leverage financial support from the following organizations: Say Yes Buffalo, Council

Teacher Thanks BTF for May Retirement Dinner

Thanks very much for the fine teacher retirement dinner at Salvatore's on May 22. I really enjoyed it.

Thanks also for all your years of dedication to the Buffalo teachers! We couldn't do it without you! I couldn't have done it without you!

May God bless! You are always in my prayers!

Laurence Ronald
Former SPED teacher

member Darius Pridgen, the Cameron and Jane Baird Foundation, Hodgson Russ, Erie County Chapter of the Links, Erie County Prime Time, United Health Care, Northwest Bank, Dr. Kenneth Gayles, La Nova Pizzeria, and Create a Mini Book.

Best Wishes,
Tanya Staples, President

BTF Remembers Lancaster Teacher

On behalf of the Przykuta family and the Lancaster Central Teachers Association, thank you for your generous donation in Eric's memory. Your kindness during this difficult time is greatly appreciated.

Mesiah Family Thanks BTF for Donation

Thank you very much for your generous donation to the NAACP on behalf of our dad, Frank Messiah. There is always more work to be done and this will help!

Thanks again,
The Messiah Women

BTF Donates \$250 to Kevin Guest House

Thank you for your support of Kevin Guest House. Your donation in the amount of \$250 will help us continue to serve the 1,200 guests each year that travel for specialized care at area medical centers.

It is through the generosity of our community, and support from donors and friends like you, that allows Kevin Guest House to help ease the financial and emotional stress that often accompanies serious illness. We are proud to be America's first healthcare hospitality house, providing a home away from home since 1972, for more than 53,000 patients and families traveling to Buffalo for critical medical care.

Thank you for believing in Kevin Guest House and our mission.

Sincerely,
Lynsey Zimdahl Weaver
Executive Director

BTF Sponsors TOY's 2018 Brew Bash

On behalf of the Board and staff at Theatre of Youth (TOY), thank you for your generous sponsorship of \$450 for TOY's 2018 Brew Bash.

This year's Brew Bash helped raise over \$30,000 towards our mission of providing WNY youth with quality professional theatre experiences that spark imaginations and encourage creative confidence.

To more fully understand the tangible benefits children receive from programming like Theatres of Youth, consider the following quote from an article by Jay P. Greene, Distinguished Professor of Education Reform at the University of Arkansas:

"The surprising result is that students who received multiple (arts-focused) field trips experienced significantly greater gains on their standardized test scores after the first year than did the control students. If we combine Math and ELA tests, we see a gain of 12.4% of a standard deviation at $p < 0.01$ which translates into roughly 87 additional days of learning."

Children engaged with the arts have a decisive, demonstrable advantage. Your support ensures that we can continue to give all students these opportunities. We are grateful for your partnership with Theatre of Youth.

Thank you for being a champion to the youth of Western New York.

With much gratitude,
Kevin Leary
Managing Director, TOY

NFJC Thanks BTF

On behalf of the National Federation for Just Communities of Western New York, we would like to thank you for your 2018 Membership gift which is so important to the many programs the NFJC of Western New York offers to the community.

Your support of the ideals of this much-needed human relations organization is greatly appreciated.

Again, we sincerely thank you for your generosity and support.

Sincerely,
Lana D. Benatovich, president

BTF Gives to Catholic Charities

Thank you very much for the generous donation to our Catholic Charity Appeal. As you know, we are facing a very challenging year and your contribution and support means a lot at this time.

With gratitude,
Dennis Walczyk, CEO

NEA Delegates Support Rumore Motion To Fund School Safety Measures

It was a busy summer for BTF delegates who attended national conventions for the National Education Association, (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

Both affiliates conducted their conventions during July. The NEA Annual Meeting and RA was held in Minneapolis, MN June 30-July 6, and the biennial AFT convention was held in Pittsburgh, PA, July 13-17.

During the conventions, delegates poured over more than 130 new business items during the NEA convention and about 100 during the AFT meeting.

Phillip Rumore, president of the BTF, introduced a resolution at the NEA convention calling for the organization to “commend and support the courageous students fighting for safe schools and that NEA, within its existing budget, ensure the safety of our students and personnel.”

The resolution, passed unanimously by the delegate body, called for additional state and local funding to:

- Employ at least one armed or unarmed officer in each school
- Hire more school counselors, social workers, school psychologists, attendance teachers, and other support personnel
- Purchase crisis tapelines or apps so students could access counselors confidentially to report bullying, violence and threats

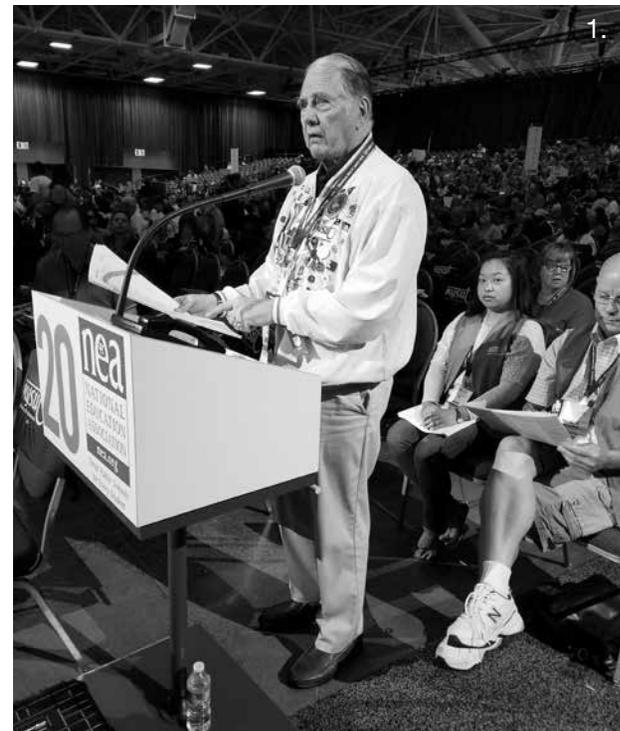
- Train personnel and parents to detect the early warning signs that a student may become violent
- Support a mandated, comprehensive background check to prevent those found guilty of violent crimes or domestic violence from purchasing or possessing a gun.

Rumore said since the Sandy Hook School shooting, there have been more than 239 school shootings with 438 people shot and 138 murdered in schools and on school grounds.

Other highlights of the NEA convention:

- Sue Raichilson, a Riverside High School Business teacher and member of the BTF Executive Committee, also addressed the NEA delegates. Accompanied at the microphone by her granddaughter, she urged delegates to oppose a resolution “to limit aid to Israel used to detain, interrogate, abuse and imprison Palestinian children in Israel’s adult military courts.” She said the resolution unfairly represented Israel and did not address human rights violations against Israel.
- Desiree Breckenridge-Barnes, a teacher at Emerson Culinary Institute, was acknowledged for representing the NEA at a School to Prison Pipeline national convention.
- Lynn Garcia, a history teacher at Hutch Tech and member of the BTF Executive Committee, was elected vice president of the NEA Women’s Caucus.

1. Concerned about violence in our schools, BTF President Phil Rumore moves forward a resolution before the NEA delegation. 2. Accompanied by her granddaughter, Sue Raichilson speaks against a proposed resolution.



BTF Delegates to the AFT Convention

Did You Know...?

That the utilization of sick time allowance for illness in the immediate family is authorized provided that the use of sick time allowance for this purpose shall in no case exceed ten (10) days?

The use of time for this purpose shall be charged against accumulated sick time allowance of the individual. Immediate family shall include a parent, child, brother, sister, grandparent, husband, wife, parent of husband or wife, or any relative permanently residing in the personal household in which the employee resides.

This information can be found in Article XXVIII,(A)(2) of the collective bargaining agreement.

BTF Proudly Marching in Area Parades

Everyone loves a parade, especially in the city of Buffalo where many are held each year. Thousands of people line the streets, cheering for their favorite participants.

For the past two years, the BTF Public Relations Committee, co-chaired by Ruyvette Townsend; Community Engagement Committee, headed by Eve Shippens Nieves and the Minority Committee, chaired by Sophia Howard Johnson, have joined forces to participate in some of the parades.

Proudly carrying the BTF banner and chanting to the crowds, the BTF has been met with cheers and waves from the crowds.

Retirement Prep Classes Are Available

Are you planning on retiring this year or in the near future?

If your answer is yes, make sure you are prepared for that glorious day!

The New York State Teachers Retirement System (NYSTRS) can answer your questions and prepare you for retirement through its Pension & Retirement Education Program (PREP) seminars.

These PREP sessions are available at various locations around the state throughout the year. The fall PREP schedule can be found by opening the PREP Schedule accordion on the [Pension & Retirement Education Program](#) page at [NYSTRS.org](#).

While most sessions fill up quickly, there are often extra seats at seminars held at Erie 1 BOCES, located in West Seneca.

This location will host PREP sessions on Wednesday, November 14 and Thursday, December 13.

PREP sessions are designed to help members of all ages prepare for retirement. Seminars are held from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., with registration beginning at 8 a.m. There is no cost to attend and attendees are welcome to bring a guest. Thousands of members attend PREP sessions each year and the feedback is overwhelmingly positive.

Reservations can be made by calling (800) 348-7298, Ext. 6180. Members with a [MyNYSTRS](#) account can reserve their spot online. Instructions are located on PREP page at [NYSTRS.org](#)

The first parade the BTF participated in this year was the Buffalo Pride Parade in the Allentown area. The Juneteenth Festival on the east side followed in June. Although the BTF has had a table at this event for many years, it's fairly new in the parade.

In August, the BTF marched in the Puerto Rican and Hispanic Day Parade on the west side of Buffalo. And on September 3, the BTF participated in the Labor Day Parade, the largest of the events, which was held in South Buffalo.

Dozens of labor unions turned out to march in the parade in a show of solidarity following the recent Supreme Court decision in the Janus case which eliminates mandated agency fees for employees who have not joined their union.

Once again the BTF marchers distributed backpacks and candy to children along the parade routes.

All BTF members are invited and urged to participate in the parades and proudly shout, "We are the BTF".



The Buffalo Pride Festival Parade



Labor Day Parade

History Teacher Wins Fulbright Global Grant

Molly Eldridge, a Social Studies teacher at Newcomer Academy, has been accepted into the Fulbright Teachers for Global Classrooms program.

Only 76 teachers nationwide were selected for the program which will include an online class and travel abroad in the summer of 2019 as well as completing a capstone project on global education.

"I applied to the program because I want to become more knowledgeable in global education so that I can create a culturally responsive classroom",

Eldridge explained.

"In addition, our classrooms in Buffalo are becoming increasingly diverse as the world is becoming increasingly interdependent and interconnected. My goal in participating in the program is to help my students become globally competent so that they can succeed in becoming global citizens and create meaningful change in the world", said Eldridge.

Our sincere congratulations go out to Ms. Eldridge for being accepted into this prestigious program.



Supplemental Benefit Fund is There for You

The Supplemental Benefit Fund, was established at the start of the second semester in the 1973-74 school year. When it began, the Board agreed to pay \$25 into the fund for each full-time equivalent teacher. The amount has steadily increased through the years but was frozen for 12 years after the previous contract expired in 2004. A negotiated benefit, the SBF was established under former BTF president Tom Pisa and exists thanks to Article XXVI, paragraph G of the collective bargaining agreement. Under the guidance of its director, David Walker, the SBF has managed to invest its funds and now pays out far more than it takes in. Being able to maintain such benefits is truly the hallmark of a successful program. Besides Walker, four support

staff work in the SBF office, located in the basement of BTF headquarters on Porter Avenue. Five trustees, including BTF President Phil Rumore, define and set the policies for the SBF. The other trustees are BTF members Maria Baker, Joel Mercado, Sue Raichilson, and Ruyvette Townsend.

Teachers receive dental and optical benefits courtesy of the Supplemental Benefit Fund and also can get \$2 back on every prescription at the end of the calendar year up to \$100 per family member annually. During negotiations for the contract ratified October 17, 2016, President Rumore made the case that the SBF had not been able to raise dental and optical benefits for members in 12 years but that those costs had escalated greatly. The BTF secured

a \$25 increase into the fund for each full-time equivalent teacher in each of the three years of the contract as well as a \$350,000 one-time payment. Even with optical exams, two pairs of glasses in a two-year period, dental work, and prescription rebates, the well-managed fund not only is solvent, but was finally able to increase dental benefits in January 2017 and all benefits in July 2018. Additional increases are expected this school year. This benefit, negotiated for you by your union, is enjoyed and appreciated by many teachers in the district. If you have any questions about your supplemental benefits, contact your delegate chair or call us at the BTF.

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Greg Mucha
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Joe Frandina
Optician

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Call Today for An Appointment With our Optometrist!

Joe is the Husband of BTF member Barbara Polino Frandina

Community Engagement Committee Sets Dates

The BTF Community Engagement Committee was established to create mutually beneficial relationships between BTF and community organizations, to enhance member engagement, and make the BTF more visible in community work.

For the 2018-2019 school year, the Committee will continue its work on two national campaigns, the *Poor People's Campaign* and *March for Our Lives/School Safety*. The Committee also will focus attention on the development of local initiatives, such as The Teacher Wellness Project. All are invited to attend the monthly meetings of the BTF Community Engagement Committee, from 4:30 – 6:00pm, at the BTF Office, 271 Porter Avenue, on the following dates:

- Wednesday, November 7
- Tuesday, December 11
- Tuesday, January 15
- Tuesday, February 12
- Tuesday, March 12
- Tuesday, April 9
- Tuesday, May 14

For more information, contact BTF Vice President Rebecca Pordum at 881-5400.



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Deceased Teachers Remembered

The Buffalo Teachers Federation remembers the following active and retired members who have recently passed away.

Vanessa Anderson
Paul Armesto
Dawn M. Barnett
Ruth F. Bayers
Muriel Beach
Dorothy Boyd
Jacqueline H. Braswell
Cynthia A. Brown
Deborah Burt
Lucy Butterbaugh
Robert L. Caetano
Alicia Campbell
Paul F. Carmody
Robert J. Carr
Sara Carter
Elaine Coghlan
Anne E. Connors
Mary Ann Corbett
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Luann Joy-Woods
Ellen Kaspar
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Thelma Lanier
Marilyn Lewis
Penny Longo
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Ursula Schifferle
Delores Smart
Patrick Starkey
Alice Stein
Genevieve S. Stenhouse
Edward Anthony Stephens
Winona Stonebraker
John O. Toy
Patricia Turner
Anthony Vetrano
Karl Wagner, III
Marilyn Walby
Sandra Walker
Elaine Wright

Tell Us What's Happening at Your School

Are you running a special performance at your building? Taking students on an overnight field trip? Was there a lesson that went exceptionally well that you would like to share with your BTF colleagues? We want to hear about it and may feature it in a future edition of the Provocator. Photos of such events are especially welcome. Please send the following information and any related photos via e-mail to salamone426@aol.com.

Name _____ School/position: _____

Personal Email _____ Phone _____

Description of event _____

All submissions become the property of the Provocator.